

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001115

SIPDIS

NSC FOR CBARTON  
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS USAID DCHA/OTI FOR RPORTER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/25/2014

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)

SUBJECT: FEAR OF REPRISALS AND UNDERREPORTED HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

REF: CARACAS 00809

Classified By: Abelardo A. Arias, Political Counselor, for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

-----  
Summary  
-----

1. (C) The Coordinadora Democratica (CD) claims its figures on human rights violations are the most accurate in Venezuela, though they are higher than those reported by the media and NGOs. DCC Judicial Advisor D'lsa Solorzano told poloff March 23 that even DCC numbers, do not portray the true magnitude of human rights violations because 70 percent of the victims fail to report them. Human rights NGO COFAVIC concurred. One such victim told poloff March 26 that his attackers threatened to kill him if he talked. End Summary.

-----  
Political Group: Defends Its Human Rights Figures  
-----

2. (C) Coordinadora Democratica (CD) Judicial Advisor D'lsa Solorzano told poloff March 23 that the opposition umbrella group's human rights abuse figures are larger than GOV, NGO, or media estimates because it allows victims to remain anonymous. For instance, she said as of March 23 the DCC documented 13 missing opposition sympathizers, compared with seven missing people tracked by the media. Likewise, the DCC knows of 26 politically motivated deaths since February 27, eleven more deaths than commonly reported by media and NGOs. The DCC alleges there are 135 political prisoners, 33 in Caracas alone, according to Solorzano, although Caracas daily El Universal listed 72 as of March 18.

3. (C) Adriana Sanoja, Media Director of Un Solo Pueblo (USP), told poloff March 25 that many victims preferred to report crimes to the DCC, rather than official sources they don't trust or human rights NGOs they are unfamiliar with, because "everyone knows someone in the DCC." She said some opposition sympathizers may trust the openly political DCC more than more neutral human rights NGOs, suspecting the groups may share information with counterparts in the GOV. She also claimed the DCC did a good job publicizing itself as a complaint center in the wake of the post February 27 protests.

4. (C) Sanoja lamented that her party is having trouble getting citizens to denounce attacks by armed Chavistas or the Sucre municipality's pro-GOV police force publicly. She claimed that people found the formal legal process intimidating and threats from neighbors and local MVR leaders ensure silence. "Why should they talk?," asked Sanoja rhetorically. "They have a choice between complaining to a justice system that will not help them and the possibility that they could lose benefits or even get hurt."

-----  
Most Cases Unreported, Especially in Barrios  
-----

5. (C) Solorzano asserted that even the DCC figures underrepresented the magnitude of the human rights problem in Venezuela because only about 30 percent of attacks, whether committed by civilian groups or uniformed security forces, are reported to GOV institutions or NGOs because of retaliation fears from "Chavista authorities." Liliana Ortega, head of Venezuelan human rights NGO COFAVIC, told poloff March 24 that Solorzano's estimate of underreported attacks is likely correct and that many victims do not report the crimes to COFAVIC or any other NGOs due to reprisal fears.

-----  
Student Fears Reporting Assault  
-----

6. (C) Student David Gamez (please protect) told poloff March 26 that he was attacked by plainclothes off-duty police March

4 in the Libertador municipality. Gamez was walking to his parent's apartment shortly after 10:30 p.m. when an unmarked

car pulled up to the curb in front of him. Four men in civilian clothes emerged and demanded to see his identification. The men told him his identification card was a forgery and asked for more identification. Gamez presented his student identification, which they also rejected as fake. They then asked him for his wallet and attacked him when he refused to hand it over.

17. (C) According to Gamez the men pistol-whipped him and kicked him while calling him "golpista" and "esqualido" (literally "coup-monger" and "squalid one," these are pejoratives Chavistas use to describe upper-class opposition supporters). As they tried to handcuff him and push him into the car, Gamez's friend, who was walking with him, approached the scuffle and yelled at the men. The four then beat Gamez's friend for a few minutes, threw Gamez's wallet back to him, and appeared to be leaving. Gamez asked the men to return 15,000 Bolivares in his wallet, which prompted another beating before they departed.

18. (C) Gamez suspected the men were either off-duty Libertador Police or Political Police (DISIP) because they wore yellow badges around their necks and referred to the older man as commissioner. They never identified themselves and warned not to report the incident "if you know what is good for you." Gamez decided not to report the attack to official sources or human rights NGOs on the advice of National Guard and police classmates. His mother, however, complained to the Libertador Police without his permission.

-----  
Comment  
-----

19. (C) As a political organization, the DCC may not be the most objective source for human rights violations, but it is doing a significant job collecting information. Solorzano and Sanoja make a strong case for why DCC figures only seem inflated and are actually low. There are surely victims who have not and will not report human rights violations, a fact that will continue to bear on the issue as the GOV plays to minimize the dimension of the issue.  
SHAPIRO

NNNN

2004CARACA01115 - CONFIDENTIAL